

Buffalo stash of little value if it's worn

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—Years ago we stashed away several Indian-head nickels with a buffalo on the back sides. Is it true that some of those coins may be extremely rare because of a wounded buffalo? Also, many of our coins don't have dates. Are they worth saving?

H.J., Chicago Heights

A—Due to one defective die, the buffalo's right front leg is missing on several thousand nickels produced at the Denver Mint in 1937. "Good condition" specimens retail for about \$90 while an uncirculated coin might fetch \$500 or more.

Some dealers pay seven cents each for buffalo nickels with worn-away dates. Certain acids will "restore" the digits by dissolving small amounts of metal, but such coins have almost no market value because the acids leave dark smudges.

Q—I've received two Statue of Liberty coin sets from the government. Since part of the price I paid supports the statue repair project, can I write off the cost on my income tax return?

B.W., Chicago

A—Despite some reports to the contrary, the experts say no part of the purchase price is tax deductible.

Q—Please help settle an argument: Does the tails-side design on Roosevelt dimes have any special significance?

L.E., Decatur

A—Yes. The design depicts a lighted torch [symbolizing liberty] surrounded by an olive branch on the left [for peace] and an oak branch on the right [for strength and independence].

Q—I've received a 1973 nickel that was stamped off center. Does it have value to collectors?

R.M., Chicago

A—Probably. A Jefferson nickel that is just slightly off center might retail for as much as \$10, depending on the coin's condition.

Q—I own several \$1 bills signed by Joseph Barr, who was secretary of the Treasury for just a brief period. At one time a New York company bought such bills. What's their value today?

K.M., Chicago

A—Although Joseph Barr was in office for only 30 days at the end of Lyndon Johnson's administration, the government still managed to print about 450 million series 1963-B bills bearing his facsimile signature. Specimens showing wear from circulation have no special value on the hobby market; crisp, uncirculated bills might retail for \$2 or \$2.50 each.